

Here is the image of God covered with rags!

There is a Jewish story about Rabbi Joshua, the son of Levi, and his trip to Rome in the third century. He was astounded to see the magnificence of the buildings, especially the care lavished upon statues which were covered with exquisite cloths to protect them from the summer heat. As he was admiring the beauty of Roman art, a beggar plucked at his sleeve and asked for a crust of bread. The sage looked at the statues and turning to the beggar in rags said: "Here are statues of stones covered with expensive clothes, and here is a man created in the image and likeness of God covered with rags. A civilization that pays more attention to statues than to human beings shall surely perish."

Telling the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in today's Gospel, Jesus asks us the same question: What are our "statues," our priorities? The poor and powerless, the illiterate, the homeless, the ill? (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

The Only Thing You Have

Dr. Leo Buscalgia tells of an experience he had in Cambodia years ago. He noticed that during monsoon season the people's way of life changed. The great rains washed away their houses, so the people lived on great communal rafts, several families together. Dr. Buscalgia writes: "I went down there on a bicycle and there they were. I thought I'd help these people move and become part of their community. The Frenchwoman whom I was talking with just laughed. 'What do they have to move?' she asked. 'Nature has taught them the only thing they have is from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet. Themselves, not things. They can't collect things because every year the monsoon comes.'"

Dr. Buscalgia reflected upon what he saw: "I couldn't help thinking to myself, what would you do, Buscalgia, if the monsoon came to Los Angeles next week? What would you take? Your color TV set? Your automobile? The only thing you have to take is you."

(by Timothy J. Smith from *What Goes Around Comes Around*)

More Versus Love

The world's philosophy is a four-letter word: More. The church's theology is also a four-letter word, but it often means the opposite of more: Love. Will the church be a force and a forum for love?

The problem with our world, our nation and our church can be summed up in one word: More. "More" has become, as Laurence Shames has put it, America's "unofficial national motto." We want more of everything: more fun, more money, more excitement, more love, more programs, more church members, more, more, more. "More is what Americans are used to, what we perceive as normal, here in the land of the escalation clause, the built-in increase. More is the way we think about 'success.'" And more is what America and the world is running out of.

The indecent discrepancy between the rich man's lifestyle and Lazarus' life-struggle was appalling. But for a long time Americans have considered themselves pretty much delivered from that kind of fearful inequality. That's why we have lumped nearly everyone into this country's great "middle class." Of course there have always been a few exceedingly rich individuals. And of course, any realistic person knows that a certain number of poor "will always be with us." But both rich and poor are still considered anomalies to the norm.(by Leonard Sweet from *Collected Works*, www.Sermons.com)

The Trouble with Generalization

Whenever we generalize people -- the poor, the rich, the elderly, teenagers, the clergy, the laity, etc., we dehumanize them. I was visiting a large church when I heard one of the members state that he didn't like women pastors. This surprised me. I asked him, "What about Sally?" Sally was one of the three clergy at the church. "Oh, Sally...she's different!" was the reply. This female clergy had a name -- and with that, a relationship with this member. That, I think, was the difference.

We may be tempted to generalize the rich -- since so few of us belong to that category. The rich man is not named, but he is also **not condemned for being rich**, but for his **indifference and uncaring attitude** towards poor Lazarus right outside his door. Remember that **Abraham was wealthy**, and he isn't in the place of torment.

(by Brian Stoffregen from *Exegetical Notes*)

"You'll learn more from that than anything I can tell you."

The story is told of a Franciscan monk in Australia assigned to be the guide and 'gofer' to Mother Teresa when she visited New South Wales. Thrilled and excited at the prospect of being so close to this great woman, he dreamed of how much he would learn from her and what they would talk about. But during her visit, he became frustrated. Although he was constantly near her, the friar never had the opportunity to say one word to Mother Teresa. There were always other people for her to meet. Finally, her tour was over, and she was due to fly to New Guinea.

In desperation, the Franciscan friar spoke to Mother Teresa: "If I pay my own fare to New Guinea, can I sit next to you on the plane so I can talk to you and learn from you?" Mother Teresa looked at him. "You have enough money to pay airfare to New Guinea?" she asked. "Yes," he replied eagerly.

"Then give that money to the poor," she said. "You'll learn more from that than anything I can tell you." Mother Teresa understood that Jesus' ministry was to the poor and she made it hers as well. (Quoted by Fr. Lakra). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).